



MIZUKI
NOGUCHI

Women's marathon

High Hopes for Beijing

At the 2004 Athens Olympics, Japan achieved an outstanding fifth place in the world medal rankings, with 16 gold, 9 silver and 12 bronze medals. Four years on, we take a look at Japan's medal prospects for the Beijing Olympics.

Women's marathon contender Mizuki Noguchi packs a lot of running power into her small frame. Weighing just 40 kg, Noguchi clinched a gold medal at the Athens Olympics in temperatures soaring above 35°C. As a result of her training for Beijing,

SATOSHI ISHII

Men's over-100kg judo



PHOTOS: PHOTO KISHIMOTO



KOSUKE KITAJIMA

Men's 100m and 200m breaststroke

Noguchi's stride now exceeds her 150 cm height, and there are hopes she will become the first woman to repeat as the Olympic marathon champion.

Kosuke Kitajima, who dominated the men's 100 and 200 meter breaststroke events in Athens, is another star athlete looking to repeat a gold-medal-winning performance. On June 8 at the Japan Championships, Kitajima shattered the world record in the 200 meter breaststroke, besting the mark of his rival American Brendan Hansen by 0.99 of a second. In Beijing we should see an even more finely-honed swimming style from Kitajima, who has been working hard on upper body strength to

complement his powerful kick.

Since Japan is the home of judo, all eyes are on Satoshi Ishii, the sport's first new star in some time. Late last year, the 21-year-old Ishii moved up from the 100 kg class to join the heavyweight 100-and-over kilogram class. At the Japan Championships in April he defeated strong rivals including Athens gold medalist Keiji Suzuki, to secure a spot on the Olympic team.

As the world's top athletes prepare to gather in Beijing, what excitement awaits us?

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